



Michigan Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Division

2006 Ruffed Grouse and American Woodcock Hunter Cooperator Survey Preliminary Results*

Ruffed grouse and American woodcock cooperator surveys rely on volunteer hunters that record numbers of hours hunted and ruffed grouse and woodcock flushed each day of hunting. Data obtained from cooperating hunters are summarized by hunt zone and by two-week intervals as the average number of grouse or woodcock flushed per hour of hunting. Flush rates reported by cooperators provide an indicator of harvest. Grouse and woodcock cooperator surveys are just one of several surveys used by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to monitor ruffed grouse and woodcock populations. Results of this survey will be combined with hunter harvest data and information gathered during spring breeding surveys to forecast grouse and woodcock hunting prospects for the 2007 season.

Cooperator Participation

Hunter records were available from 239 cooperators who hunted in 2006. These hunters spent 5,850 hours afield. In 2005, we received reports from 265 cooperators that spent 6,424 hours afield.

Ruffed Grouse Flush Rates

The number of ruffed grouse flushed per hour by cooperators in 2006 (1.81) increased 19.1% statewide compared to flush rates from 2005 (1.52). Ruffed grouse flush rates were highest in Zone 2 (Northern Lower Peninsula), followed by Zones 1 (Upper Peninsula) and 3 (Southern Lower Peninsula), respectively (Figures 1 and 2). The highest average flush rates reported by cooperators were during October 16-31 in Zone 1, November 1-14 in Zone 2, and December 1-15 in Zone 3 (Table 1).

American Woodcock Flush Rates

The number of American woodcock flushed per hour by cooperators in 2006 (1.41) increased 3.7% statewide compared to flush rates from 2005 (1.36). American woodcock flush rates were highest in Zone 2, followed by Zones 1 and 3, respectively (Figure 3 and 4). Average flush rates peaked during September 15-30 in Zone 2 and October 16-31 in Zones 1 and 3 (Table 1).

2007 Hunting Forecast

The upcoming ruffed grouse hunting season looks promising as we approach the midway point of the 10-year grouse population cycle. It is expected that the population will be near the high point around 2010. For woodcock hunting this fall, it is anticipated that woodcock numbers

Table 1. Average ruffed grouse and American woodcock flush per hour^a, by two week intervals, as reported by cooperating hunters in 2006.

Species and dates	Zone ^b		
	1	2	3
Ruffed grouse			
September 15–30	1.40	2.25	1.08
October 1–15	1.48	1.86	0.84
October 16–31	1.91	2.02	1.08
November 1–14	1.03	2.37	1.04
December 1–15	1.03	1.68	1.29
December 16–January 1	1.40	2.22	1.09
American woodcock			
September 15–30	0.97	2.33	0.91
October 1–15	1.15	2.18	1.74
October 16–31	1.42	1.75	2.15
November 1–14	0.14	0.39	0.68
December 1–15	0.00	0.09	0.00
December 16–January 1	0.00	0.02	0.01

^aDoes not include hunting data when effort was <20 hours.

^bSee Figure 2 for boundaries of zones.

*The results will be final when the annual status report is published.

will be similar to last year. The best grouse and woodcock hunting opportunities will continue to be in areas of young early forest successional habitat.

Acknowledgments

We thank all of the cooperators who maintained and provided grouse and woodcock hunting records. Lou Ann Shaw entered cooperator data.

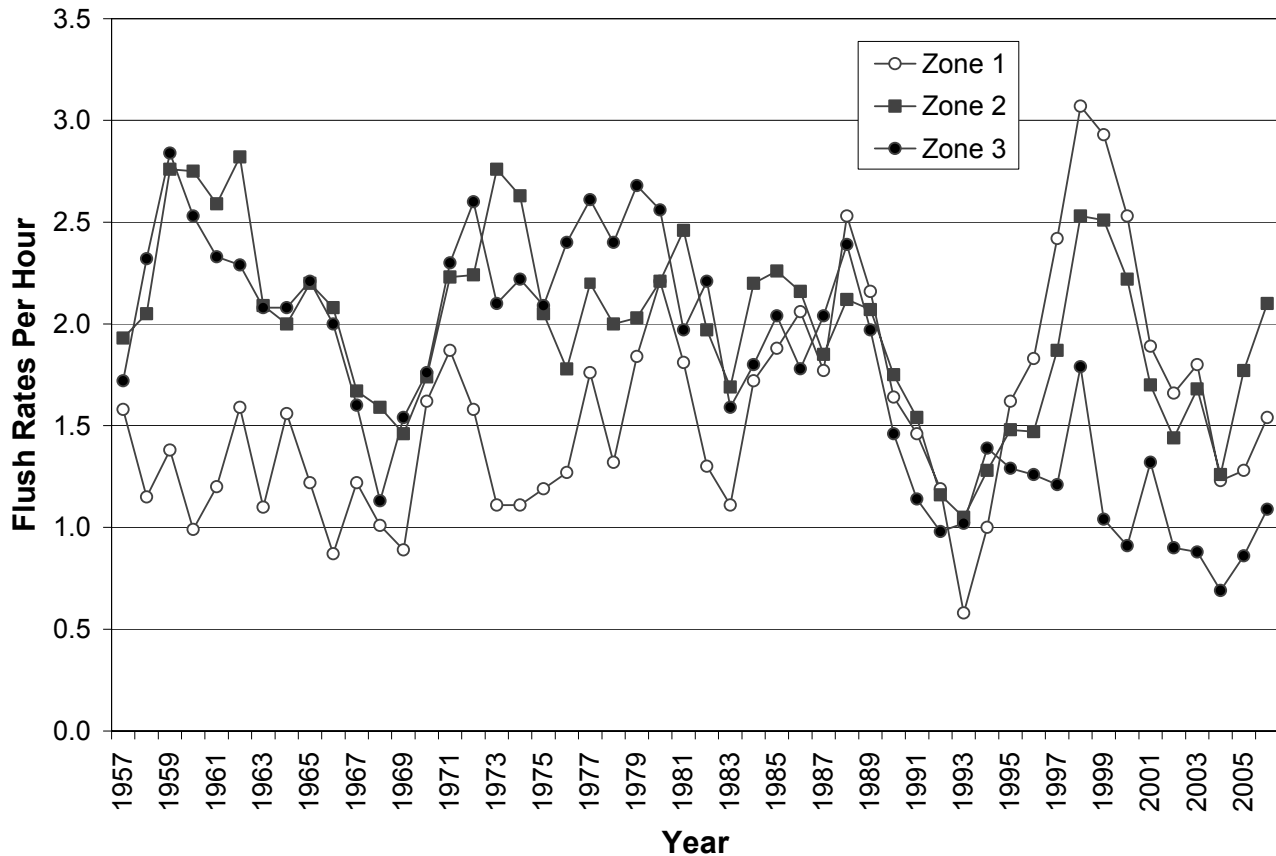
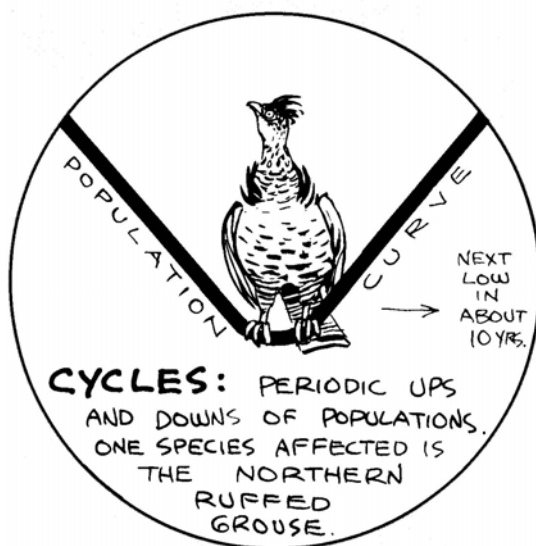


Figure 1. Ruffed grouse flush rates reported by cooperating hunters, 1957-2006.



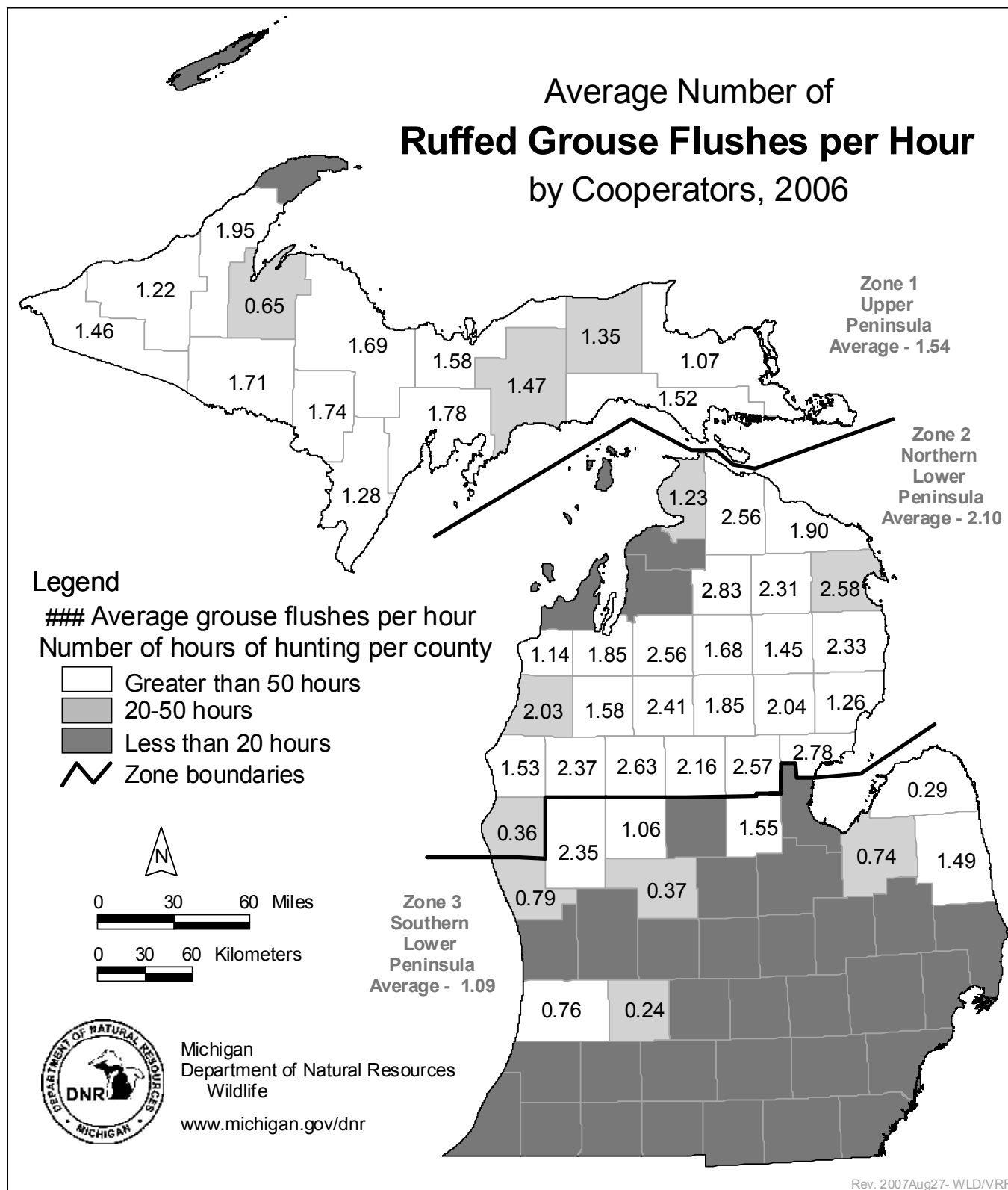


Figure 2. Average number of ruffed grouse flushed per hour by cooperators in 2006.

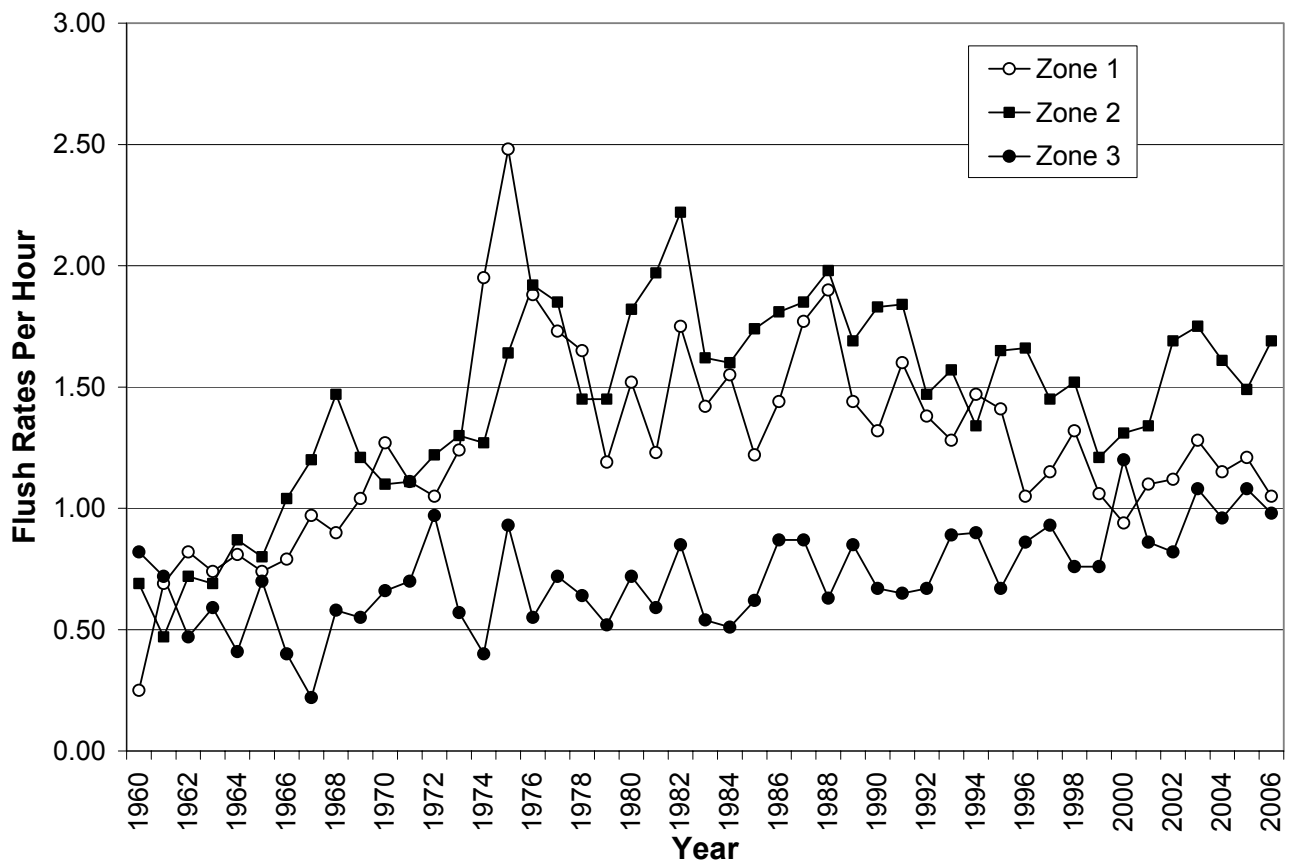


Figure 3. American woodcock flush rates reported by cooperating hunters, 1960-2006.



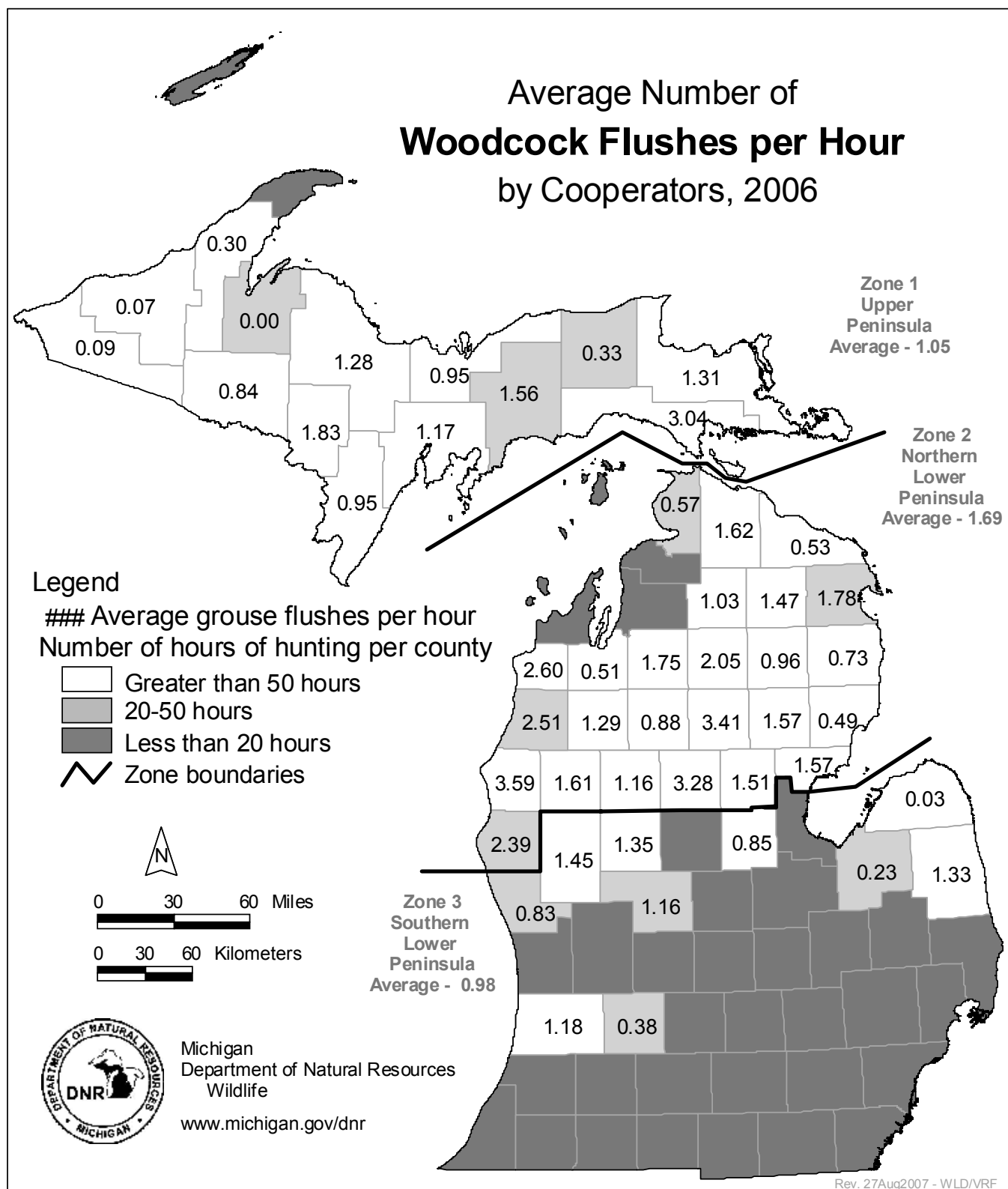


Figure 4. Average number of American woodcock flushed per hour by cooperators in 2006.